Maine State Legislature
Bill Production System project

Vendor Communications : Questions and Answers Log

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Question	Can you provide more information on the current application architecture? This will be important when trying to estimate the integration efforts in the project. We are trying to understand the business applications, the scope of what they do and the technology they use.
Answer	The current application (MELD) is based on SQL Server 7 architecture (currently running on a SQL 2005 platform in 7 compatibility mode). The application is a combination of a proprietary platform for the UI (Omnibuilder), Abortext EPIC editor and VB. The current application was conceived as a solution that would completely replace a legacy WANG drafting system and would include document production, meta data, Statute update and maintenance, reporting, publication and workflow. In practice it has filled most of these requirements at one time or another but did only a couple of them well. In fact, workflow was never implemented and continued on the WANG system and subsequently in LEAP. In the 11 years that MELD has been in production, most of its tasks have shifted to LEAP with only document production, statute update and maintenance, and publication remaining completely within the purview of MELD. Our intention with this project is to replace the remaining MELD functionality.

Question	Is the LEAP database staying in place?
Answer	Yes

Question	How are bills and amendments published to members, staff and the public? Are there internal applications for bill versions and amendments?
Answer	Currently, our bill production process uses a combination of MELD and a second, vendor developed application to generate output. MELD extracts the XML from the database and passes it off to the second application which produces both MS Word and embedded font PDFs (embedded fonts are a requirement of our print contractor.) Originally the publication process used an EPIC editor feature to save the XML output as a Word document but shortly its limitations (e.g. properly handling line numbers) forced us to find alternatives.

Question	Is the drafting tool used in the House and Senate?
Answer	No

Question	How do you engross accepted amendments? Are the chambers responsible for engrossed versions?
Answer	The chambers do not have any bill production responsibilities (aside from the occasional chamber order, seat assignments, committee assignment changes, chamber rules and the like). Production of the engrosser is done by technicians in the Revisor of Statutes office. The resulting engrosser is sent to the Engrossing office (within the Revisor of Statutes office) where it is reviewed, approved and released.

Question	How are amendments entered in the Journal in the current process?
Answer	Maine does not have the concept of a journal as it pertains to the bill production process.

Question	How are requests managed in the current process
Answer	By "requests" we are assuming you mean bill draft requests. Currently, MELD is the originator of metadata, including legislative request number, title, sponsor, submitting authority, etc. That data is pushed immediately to LEAP where initial workflow is also generated. As the bill is produced, any effected statute is pushed via a batch process from MELD to LEAP. All substantive changes to meta data are done via MELD and pushed to LEAP. Workflow is the only dataset that is maintained in LEAP directly. State of Maine is currently working to reverse that process, making LEAP the originator of all metadata, pushing to MELD only that data necessary to produce a bill draft.

Question	Do you have statistics on the volume of drafts, amendments, bill versions and enacted bills in a typical session year or biennium?
Answer	Exact numbers can be provided if necessary but generally we have between 2000 and 2500 drafts (encompassing all types of bills: acts, orders, resolutions, etc.) and between 1500 and 2000 amendments. Typically something less than 50% of public acts and resolves are enacted into law.

Question	What is the volume of converted data and is it all in one consistent format? Do you want to convert drafts and amendments from previous sessions?
Answer	As indicated in the RFP, it is our intention that the Maine Revised Statutes may be converted for use in a new system. They are currently stored as 62 well-formed XML documents (one for each title) comprising 106Mb. It is not our intent to convert previous sessions' bill drafts and amendments as they already exist in MS Word documents, stored and accessible on our network. It IS our intent however, that those documents will be exposed and usable in the new bill production system. If that requirement implies that they must be converted somehow for use then that fact should be part of any response to the RFP.

Question	Is the statute update process fully in scope?
Answer	Yes

Question	Is the session law production process in scope?
Answer	Yes

Question	What publishers do you use to publish the printed books, e.g. Westlaw?
Answer	Westlaw. However, two other publications are generated locally and should be considered in scope: Laws of Maine and Bill Summaries.

Question	Page 2 of the RFP states that "The 128th Maine Legislature seeks proposals from qualified vendors to provide a MS Word based legislative bill production system […]". On page 14 it is stated that proposals could describe "a commercially available package that supports the entire system". See Note (1) below Our company provides a user-friendly XML-based solution that is precisely designed for legislative bill production, has the look and feel of a word processing tool, and is being used in several jurisdictions. It is capable of producing MS Word, HTML, PDF and ePUB documents in a variety of layouts, including authoritative/official versions. Could the Legislature please indicate whether MS Word is a mandatory technology upon which the solution must be based or whether a different commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) product that is highly optimized for legislative drafting is acceptable?
Answer	Being an MS Office-centered environment, we have a very deep knowledge base when it comes to working with Word. The requirement that we be able to maintain our environment and update it as

necessary stems from our 10+ year history of depending on an outside entity to provide ALL support for our bill production system. That said, the efficient, accurate production of legislation is paramount to this project and if the right solution for Maine's needs includes something other than or in addition to MS Word as the editing environment, we may give it consideration. However, any solution must address concerns Maine has with user training and use, both in drafting and bill production, system integration with existing resources including MS Word and MS SQL Server database backend.

Question	The Legislature states on page 8 that "All computer program source code shall be delivered to the Office of Legislative Information Technology. This will include compile/load scripts, documentation, training, etc.". However, to ensure document and system integrity throughout the production process, certain modules, libraries and algorithms of our product are not available as source code. See Note (2) below Our solution is a commercial off-the-shelf product offering a multitude of configuration options that can be managed by the client. For example, modifications to style sheets for document production as well as the conception and integration of new functionality to the document editing environment is possible. As a solution that has existed for over 20 years, our company invests on average between $500,000 to $750,000 in the development and enhancement thereof every year. Our bill production system is used by several clients and boasts a return on investment (ROI) that could conservatively be calculated at 30%-50% on annual operation costs, compared to using traditional text editing tools. Given the above-mentioned autonomy over product development that is retained by the Legislature's development team, could the Legislature please indicate whether an arrangement of this type would be acceptable, as opposed to the delivery of all computer program source code?
Answer	Similar to the previous answer, the efficient, accurate production of legislation is paramount to this project and if the right solution for Maine's needs includes something other than complete autonomy over source and maintenance, we may give it consideration.

Question	Various references are made to software warranty throughout the RFP document. However, section 5.2 of the RFP document refers to the intention of LIT staff to "[…] be able to both maintain and build new functionality going forward after project completion." Since Our company cannot provide warranty on software that has been altered, in part or in whole by the client, could the Legislature please: a) Elaborate on the scope of warranty and support that is expected? b) Elaborate on what is meant by "project completion"?
Answer	It is our intent that a successful solution will include a warranty period to be determined in the contract negotiation. This period will cover at least one regular session (and perhaps more) of the Maine Legislature during which time the contractor will be responsible for maintaining and updating the solution while engaging in knowledge transfer sufficient to allow Maine to maintain going forward. Given your previous statements about your product, the amount of maintenance we would be responsible for would have to be determined.

Question	Could the Legislature please indicate the projected budget for the legislative bill production system described in its RFP?
	
	    a) Between $100,000 and $500,000
	    b) Between $500,000 and $999,999
	    c) Between $1,000,000 and $2,000,000
	    d) More than $2,000,000

Answer	The budget will be appropriate for the solution selected.